

## **A Profile of Dental Assistants in North Dakota September 2000**

In November of 1998, a survey of registered dental assistants was conducted by the North Dakota Department of Health and the Office of Rural Health. The questionnaire was sent to 363 North Dakota registered dental assistants in conjunction with their registration renewal. Two hundred fifty-one surveys were returned for a response rate of 69 percent. This data will serve as baseline to track the dental assisting workforce trends in the state. A database of dental assistants was created and will be updated every two years.

### **Summary findings:**

(Findings represent only those dental assistants who responded to the survey.)

### **Residence**

More than one-half (55.6%) of the dental assistants live in the state's major cities/metropolitan statistical areas. More than one-third (36.2%) reside in Bismarck and Fargo.

Bismarck	15.5%
Fargo	20.7%
Grand Forks	5.6%
Mandan	5.2%
Minot	4.4%
Moorhead, MN	4.4%

While 87.6 percent of the dental assistants reside in North Dakota, about 10 percent live in Minnesota.

More than one-half (61%) of the dental assistants reside in five counties in the state.

Burleigh	16.7%
Cass	25.9%
Grand Forks	7.6%
Morton	5.6%
Ward	5.2%

### **Age**

The age of dental assistants ranged from 21 to 64. The average age was 36.85 years, and the median age was 36.48 years.

A breakdown of dental assistants by age group follows:

21-30 years	25.6%
31-40 years	36.0%
41-50 years	31.6%
51-60 years	6.4%
61+ years	.4%

## **Employment Status**

A majority of dental assistants (90.4%) are currently working in positions that require they keep their dental assistant registration current, while 1.6 percent are working in volunteer positions, and 8 percent are not working in positions that require current registration.

Only 2.2 percent of dental assistants were temporary employees at the primary work site, while 31.3 percent of dental assistants were temporary employees at their secondary work site.

The most commonly cited reasons for inactive status were unemployed and seeking work, not working because of family reasons, and being a student.

## **Primary Practice Employment**

### *Location*

A majority of dental assistants (62.6%) were employed in the state's major cities. Nearly one-half (49.8%) were employed in Bismarck and Fargo.

Bismarck	20.7%
Fargo	29.1%
Grand Forks	7.6%
Minot	5.2%

Only 6 percent of dental assistants worked at a secondary site.

### *Hours*

The range of hours worked at the primary employment site was from two to 50 hours. The average number of hours worked was 34 hours per week.

The range of hours worked at the secondary employment site was from four to 32 hours. The average number of hours worked was 16 hours per week.

A majority (87.6%) of dental assistants felt they worked in dental assisting "the right amount of hours." Only 7.5 percent felt they worked fewer hours than they wanted and 4.9 percent felt they worked more hours than they wanted.

## **Procedures Performed**

Nearly all dental assistants are taking radiographs, performing infection control measures and taking impressions. Other procedures are performed less frequently by dental assistants.

Taking radiographs	98.3%
Performing infection control measures	98.3%
Taking impressions (for study casts, orthodontic retainers and mouth guards)	90.0%
Applying anticariogenic agents topically	32.9%

Fabricating temporary crowns	45.9%
Applying acid-etching prior to sealant placement	29.4%
Placing/removing rubber dams	34.2%
Polishing coronal surfaces	51.1%
Placing and removing matrix bands	29.9%